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United for Quality Care

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Mike Whelan, Consumer
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Before the Appropriations Committee

Good evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the committee, my name is Mike Whelan and I am a Consumer-Employer from West Haven. I was one of the first Consumers on the waiver program, and I've been hiring PCAs since 2007. I'm lucky to have 3 that have been with me a long time.

Last Christmas, I got COVID, and unfortunately 2 of my PCAs got sick too. When they're sick, it's horrible. My PCA Jannell continued coming to care for me while she was sick with COVID, both because she couldn't afford NOT to work and because it's pure and simple – if they don't come, I can't get up. But because they can't afford to take a single day off, we kept passing the virus back and forth to each other. It hurts that the State of CT hasn't honored its promises to PCA's and provided them with paid sick days and the 6% stipend for health insurance that was won in the contract that the legislature passed. It hurts that the state thinks 3 days notice is enough time to give this workforce to apply for the health insurance stipend.

PCAs are human beings. They need to be treated with the same dignity we demand of ourselves. They deserve paid time off. If PCAs could afford to take time off, there would be less illness passing back and forth.

We've made some progress over the last 10 years, but we and our PCAs need a lot more. PCAs need quality benefits that allow them to take care of themselves when they are sick.

Thank you for your time.